



Letters to the Editor

Fanwood Community House Is Seen As More Practical Location for Park

We are pleased that Mayor Maryanne S. Connelly and the Council of Fanwood are taking advantage of Union County Pocket Park grants. While some consider this \$125,000 grant "free money," it's our county taxes being returned, which now must be matched by \$125,000 in borough funds or in-kind service.

We believe that spending these funds for a passive park at the Community House would greatly enhance this historic site, which is the pride and focal point of Fanwood because of the following:

- Landscaping for a passive park at the Community House would greatly enhance this historic site, which is the pride and focal point of Fanwood.

- More residents would use this park because of its central location, whereas the Watson Road site is isolated. Commuters, neighboring residents (including Watson Road), people attending Community House meetings and functions, and people attending weekend events such as flea markets and car shows, all would benefit from a beautifully-landscaped passive park at the Community House.

- This area is currently maintained by the Department of Public Works so there would be no additional maintenance cost, whereas the Watson Road site would probably require an outside maintenance contract.

- The Watson Road site could generate tax ratables because it is buildable for two or three homes. The revenue from the sale of this property, estimated to be \$70,000 to \$80,000, would provide the borough's share of matching funds, eliminating any burden on taxpayers for a pocket park.

We recommend that a cost/benefit comparison of the Community House property, the Watson Road site and the Midway Circle be conducted to determine how much this "free money" is going to cost the Fanwood taxpayer.

Greg Cummings, Chairman
Jack Molenaar, Vice Chairman
Fanwood Planning Board

'Save the Rialto' Group Also Deserves Kudos For Preserving Theater

In addition to thanking Jesse Sayegh for preserving the Rialto Theatre, the community should also recognize the "Save the Rialto" Committee.

This group of local citizens never gave up and, because of their efforts, we still have a viable movie theater in the central business district. We should be grateful to them as well. Thanks!

Sally Hanford
Westfield

'Bottom Line' Mentality Responsible For Prospective Loss of Town Stores

Your recent article "Elm St. Businesses Lose Leases in Favor of National Retailer" was both enlightening and depressing. Enlightening because it brought into focus the bottom line mentalities of the heirs of the owners of downtown real estate. Depressing because Tim, the courteous gentleman who takes real pride in constructing customized sandwiches, will probably not be downtown any more.

Gary Goodman speaks of "a more stable tenancy" for his family's Elm Street property. What nonsense. The deli has been there for 35 years, plus 18 under the previous deli owner. Backroom Antiques has been in the same location for 20 years.

Mr. Goodman states that his family's building "is a good location that's under-rented." After the upgrading of the retail space of this building and a more substantial rent is being paid to the owners, will the town re-appraise and increase their taxes? That's what happens to homeowners. Does it happen to landlords of commercial property?

There seems to be an overabundance of doublespeak about empty stores and negative feeling, a desire for high rent retailers, a mix of independent shops and national chains.

This is a bad dream — banks, real estate offices, restaurants, and many miniature versions of mall stores, all without a mall roof and adequate parking.

Small business owners, courage! We like and respect your courtesy, determination, and sometimes funky individuality compared to the casual, impersonal and sometimes rude treatment by national chain store employees.

Carol S. La Pierre
Westfield

Chamber of Commerce Board Wants to Preserve Independent Businesses

The Westfield Area Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors held their monthly meeting on July 15. Chamber members said that Westfield is a vital and thriving downtown, claiming it is one of the few remaining in New Jersey.

According to Westfield attorney Carl Peer, who is on the Board, "Westfield has a wonderful and very unique mix of retail and service businesses. If the balance of stores becomes uneven in the future, it will adversely affect the whole downtown. The small independent businesses need to remain in Westfield to maintain this existing balance. Without them, Westfield loses its special quality, the core of local businesses that makes it distinctive from other downtowns and malls."

Board member Jubb W. Corbet, Jr., a long-time Westfield resident and businessman, claimed that as larger retail chain stores move into the downtown, rents are increasing dramatically.

"If the small retailer, who has always been the mainstay of downtown Westfield, is unable to afford the higher rents, it leaves them no choice but to close or relocate their business. Landlords are also attracted by higher rents offered by the chain stores, and may decide not to renew the leases of their long-term tenants. A short-term real estate profit does not always translate into a long-term gain for the property owner," according to Mr. Corbet.

Chamber directors indicated in a statement they felt that affordable retail space is becoming harder for the smaller merchant to find. Many of the independent businesses have been in Westfield through good times and bad, chamber directors claimed, and have managed to be successful for many years. They deserve the opportunity to stay, the group insisted.

"The Chamber does not want to see any successful business forced to leave their established location against their will," said Debbie Schmidt, Execu-

tive Director of the Chamber.

Members of the Chamber Board members indicated that the smaller businesses are looking for support from the business community, the town government, and residents.

The directors said small business owners want everyone in Westfield to be involved in deciding the future make-up of the downtown, rather than having it dictated by what they described as "outside interests."

In the past, the Chamber said, residents and the Chamber rallied support for local businesses by defeating plans for a proposed mall on the edge of town. Chamber directors also recalled the "Save the Rialto" citizen group that successfully steered the neighborhood theater into the arms of an independent owner when it was threatened with closure.

Stan Baum, Chamber Chairman said, "Input from the businesses and the residents can make a difference in determining Westfield's future. The Chamber Board encourages individuals to speak up and let their preferences be heard."

Mr. Corbet stated that, "Independent retailers offer customers personalized service by the owner of the establishment, who often knows the customer's name and family. Shoppers truly enjoy being recognized by their local merchants."

"Small businesses also generously support the local community organizations. They buy advertisements in programs and donate merchandise to be used as prizes for events. The loyalty of the independent retailer to the Westfield community needs to be appreciated and valued," he added.

Finally, Chamber directors agreed in their written statement that the Chamber of Commerce should continue to support "a healthy business climate and preserve small businesses as an integral part of the balance that makes Westfield a wonderful place to live, work and shop."



HIGHEST HONOR... Anthony John Attanasio of Boy Scout Troop No. 39, under the direction of Scoutmaster Robert Rietzke, recently received the highest rank in scouting — Eagle Scout. A 1998 graduate of Westfield High School, Anthony will attend St. Joseph's University in Philadelphia in the fall, where he plans to major in political science. Pictured with Anthony at his Court of Honor, left to right, are: Westfield Councilwomen Janis Fried Weinstein and Gail S. Vernick, and Assemblyman Richard H. Bagger, who presented Anthony with a signed proclamation from the New Jersey State Assembly and the Senate in honor of his achievement.



FRESH WARES... Residents shop the Scotch Plains Farmers Market last Saturday morning — until 2 p.m. — at the Municipal Building parking lot on Park Avenue in downtown. New Jersey farmers provide the produce while Scotch Plains Business and Professional Association arranges the event weekly, through October.

Congressman Franks Urges Federal Tax Reform

Congressman Bob Franks, Republican from the Seventh District, said in June that the State Assembly passage of a "Scrap the Tax" is an important step forward on the road to fundamental tax reform.

A spokesman for Congressman Franks said he has been one of the leaders in the national movement to scrap the federal income tax.

According to Mr. Franks, "If fundamental tax reform is to become a reality, taxpayers across the country must stand up and demand change. I urge the Senate to follow the Assembly's lead and pass the 'Scrap the Tax' public question. It would give New Jersey voters an opportunity to help drive the tax reform to the top of the national agenda."

"A strong showing of support from New Jersey taxpayers can help pressure the Senate and the President to stand up to the special interests, abolish the current tax system and develop a simpler and fairer way to finance the essential services of the federal government," he said.

"There is no issue that captures more public interest and anger than the current federal income tax code. Recently, more than 6,000 of my constituents responded to a survey and voiced their strong support for scrapping the current tax code. The public is fed up with a system that's

impossible to understand, incredibly expensive to enforce and loaded up with loopholes designed to help only the wealthy and the powerful special interests," according to Congressman Franks.

A spokesman for the congressman said that in June, the House passed the "Tax Code Termination Acts" that would give Congress four years to come up with a new system for collecting federal taxes.

Mr. Franks said "Despite the strong show of support in the House, the battle over tax reform is far from over. The special interests are waging an all-out effort to kill the bill in the Senate. Through a New Jersey ballot question, voters can fight back against the special interests and demand a simpler and fairer tax system."

Lisa Tobelmann Earns Perfect 4.0 at Houghton

Lisa Tobelmann of Westfield, a junior at Houghton College in Houghton, New York, was named to the Dean's Honor List for the Spring 1998 semester.

All 185 students on the list achieved a grade point average of 3.75 or higher and are carrying full-time course loads of at least 12 credit hours.

Lisa is one of 55 students on the list who earned a perfect 4.0 grade point average.